

It was a

"Happy Birthday Houston!"

by Sarah Gish

With all the swirling around of developers versus preservationists, it's important for us to remember that our city was actually founded by two developers: brothers Augustus Chapman Allen and John Kirby Allen. They ventured here from New York City and maneuvered their small riverboat along a bayou choked with snags to see their latest acquisition: a half-league of land with two bayous. On August 30, 1836, they ran an ad in the *Telegraph* and the *Texas Register* to entice residents, stating that the grassland on the coastal plain would become the "great interior commercial emporium of Texas" and that ships from the northeast to New Orleans could sail up Buffalo

Bayou. They planned to build a sawmill and sold lots at moderate prices. The Allen Brothers named the town Houston after general Sam Houston who led Texas to independence from Mexico. The townsite also served as the temporary capital of the Republic of Texas. It was then that our city's ship channel began taking water

from the confluence of the two streams of the newly cleaned-out Buffalo Bayou to move goods from the Gulf of Mexico to the world beyond. No one could have guessed that this land and its waterways would be responsible for attracting much of our city's wealth and prosperity.

Save Our Landmarks (www.saveourlandmarks.org), a Houston area preservation group, felt it was important to celebrate Houston's birth with the communities that continue to make it strong. They met with city officials and set out to include diverse groups in a city-wide celebration of Houston called "Happy Birthday Houston! Honoring our Past, Inspiring Our Future." This year the Mayor's annual city birthday fundraiser was augmented by events organized by community groups that helped enrich this important milestone. The centerpiece of this year's celebration was the dedication of "Founder's Memorial Park" by the Daughters of the American Revolution's Alexander Love Chapter (who continue to lovingly restore the cemetery). It's a fitting tribute, since this cemetery was the final resting place for John Kirby Allen and his mother. It's located at 1217 W. Dallas Street at Valentine Road.

For more information on preservation in our city, sign up on the Save Our Landmarks website to receive emails with the latest news and updates as well as information on "Happy Birthday Houston 2008". *



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